

REMARKS

After entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 1-3 and 5-14 are currently pending in this application. Claim 4 is hereby cancelled, and new claims 13 and 14 are added via this Amendment.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 8, 10, 11 and 12 contain allowable subject matter.

Applicants hereby adopt the Examiner's suggested amendments for overcoming the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as set forth in numbered paragraph 2 bridging pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

The cancellation of claim 4 renders moot the rejections thereof under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs.

Claims 11 and 12 are also rejected for failing to comply with 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph. Specifically, the Examiner contends that the omission of the recitation that the venting gap extends over a full circumference of the side portion ring is improper. Accordingly, Applicants hereby adopt the Examiner's suggested amendments to claim 11 on page 5 of the Office Action. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of these claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-7 and 9 are again rejected in view of Ladouce, Christoff, Youngblood and JP '929. Applicants argued in the previous Amendment that none of the prior art teaches or suggests a venting gap between two or more sub-rings of a side ring portion. Now, the Examiner contends that the venting gaps in Ladouce are between the hoops or lamelliform elements 20 located in the side ring portion. See col. 8, lines 28-30 of Ladouce. The Examiner contends that the claims do not exclude the "holes" described at the bottom of col. 3 and top of col. 4 of Ladouce (which extend through the support 10). Significantly, the Examiner comments at the end of the second full paragraph on page 10 of the Office Action that:

"Stated differently, claim 2 fails to require the venting gap to extend across the full width of a side ring portion, which is not covered by a support."

Claim 2 does recite that the venting gap passes through the ring from the inside toward the outside thereof. Nevertheless, based on the Examiner's comments regarding Ladouce in the second full paragraph on page 10 of the Office Action, Applicants hereby amend claims 1 and 2 to each recite that the venting gap extends across the full width of the side ring portion and opens to an outside of the mold. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §§102(b) and/or 103(a) is respectfully requested.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.116
U.S. SERIAL NO. 09/993,504

ART UNIT 1733
Q65011

New claims 13 and 14 are added to obtain more varied protection for the invention. Independent claim 13 corresponds to original claims 2 and 8, and claim 14 corresponds to original claim 10, but depends from claim 13. Allowance of these claims is respectfully requested in as much as the Examiner indicated that claims 8 and 10 include allowable subject matter.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby earnestly solicited. If any points remain in issue that the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number listed below.

An Excess Claim Fee Payment Letter and appropriate fee accompanies this document. The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all additional required fees (except the Issue/Publication Fees) to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

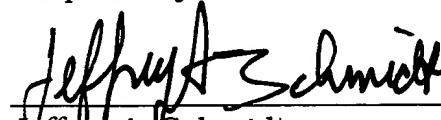
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